

Minutes from a Meeting of the Concordia Council on Student Life
Held on January 9, 2009
Loyola Campus AD-308, 10am

PRESENT: Ms. Elizabeth Morey (Chair), Ms. Lauren Broad (Secretary), Ms. Anna Barrafato, Dr. Donald Boisvert, Ms. Claudie Boujaklian, Ms. Daniela Caputo, Mr. Elie Chivi, Mr. Roger Côté, Mr. Jean Crevier (on behalf of Mr. Jean Brisebois), Ms. Catherine Dicaire, Ms. Melanie Drew, Mr. Jean-Marc Edwards (on behalf of Mr. Gerald Beasley), Ms. Angela Ghadban, Ms. Priscila Gomes, Ms. Marlene Gross, Ms. Keyana Kashfi, Ms. Lina Lipscombe, Mr. Kurt Reckziegel, Mr. Rodney Roberts (on behalf of Ms. Katherine Hedrich), Mr. Jean-Philippe Savard, Ms. Katie Sheahan, Ms. Laura Stanbra, Ms. Brigitte St-Laurent, Ms. Lorraine Toscano, Mr. Devin Wells.

ABSENT WITH REGRETS: Mr. Gerald Beasley, Mr. Jean Brisebois, Ms. Johanne De Cubellis, Ms. Rose Wangechi.

ABSENT: Mr. Ahmed Ali Abumazwed, Dr. Catherine Bolton, Ms. Katherine Hedrich, Ms. Cathy Lin.

GUEST: Ms. Jane Hackett.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Chair called the meeting to order. Dr. Boisvert moved to approve the agenda. Ms. Drew seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

2. REMARKS FROM THE CHAIR

The Chair advised the Council that following the request of Ms. Gomes at that last CCSL meeting, an attempt was made to replace bottled water with pitchers of water. Chartwells advised that this was not possible at the Loyola campus, therefore several larger bottles were provided instead. The Chair reminded the Council that this meeting was an additional meeting to the original schedule. The agenda would be complete, however the focus of the meeting would be on the budget. The Chair noted that Mr. Beasley was absent due to the unfortunate passing of his father, and Mr. Edwards was present in his place. The Chair also presented Mr. Roberts, attending on behalf of Ms. Hedrich, as well as Mr. Crevier, attending on behalf of Mr. Brisebois. Ms. Caputo and Ms. Lipscombe were welcomed, as it was their first attendance at CCSL for the 2008-2009 school year. Dr. Boisvert requested to add an item to the agenda under New Business: the Presidential Panel on Student Engagement. The Chair approved.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF NOVEMBER 21ST, 2008

Mr. Chivi asked that the minutes be revised to reflect the fact that Ms. Gomes, not Ms. Kashfi, had requested that bottled water be replaced by pitchers of water at future CCSL meetings. Ms. Stanbra moved to approve the minutes and Ms. Gomes seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Mr. Côté distributed three documents to the members of CCSL that would provide further clarification to questions that were raised in the previous CCSL meeting. The first document gave the breakdown of the number of full-time, part-time and casual employees in the Student Services and the Recreation & Athletics sectors. Mr. Côté pointed out that the statistics for the casual employees were based on figures from the 2007-2008 fiscal year. Departments continue to hire casual employees throughout the semester, therefore current year data would only provide a projection. Ms. Kashfi inquired whether the positions filled by students were temporary and Mr. Côté confirmed that this was usually correct. He added that it is clear from the figures in this document that the temporary, casual positions continue to be a significant source of employment for students. The second and third documents were the current Student Services and the current Recreation & Athletics salary and non-salary budgets. Mr. Côté brought the Council's attention to the fact that the heading on the Student Services budget

was for 2009-2012, however the budget was for the current 2008-2009 fiscal year. He noted that approximately 90% of the Student Services budget is allocated to salary expenses. Mr. Côté explained that these budgets will be explored in more detail as budget discussions continue.

5. REPORTS AND ITEMS OF INFORMATION

5.1 Sub-committees

Committee on Communications & Awareness Raising of the Student Services Sector

Ms. Sheahan reported that the Committee had met after the previous CCSL meeting and it was very successful. She noted that January will be a very busy month, however the Committee members will be reviewing their material until their next meeting. They hope to have a report available for CCSL to review before the end of January.

6. DISCUSSION ON EMERGING NEEDS

The Chair reminded the Council about the concern of duplication of services in the University that had been discussed at the previous meeting (i.e. counseling and advocacy services) and asked if there were any more concerns to be discussed at this time. No concerns were raised.

7. BUDGET PLANNING

A Power Point presentation was given by Mr. Côté in order to explain the essential elements of the budget development process. He noted that two working sessions were planned for members of CCSL to meet with directors to discuss the budgets in greater detail. Mr. Côté proceeded to describe the contextual factors impacting the budget planning process. One factor is the importance of respecting the professional operating norms with regards to salary. Ms. Sheahan was asked to speak about the request for increased access to counseling services. She recalled that Ms. Barrafato had made the distinction at the previous CCSL meeting between a student requesting to speak with a counselor and a student in crisis. She noted that a student in crisis would always be seen right away, without having to book in advance. Ms. Sheahan informed the Council that the historical data has shown that the average student will use 3.5-4.5 of the 15 counseling sessions that they are offered per academic year. Only approximately 100 students per year have historically needed additional counseling. Ms. Sheahan noted that the Counseling & Development sector would continue to evaluate their services to ensure that counseling hours are used productively, to reach and aid as many students as possible. Ms. Gomes asked for a clear definition of a student “in crisis”. Ms. Barrafato explained that it would be a student who has experienced some kind of event or trauma, for example, the loss of a loved one, who is in shock and would need immediate assistance to deal with the situation.

Mr. Côté addressed the impact of the Student Advocate Program and Legal Information Services. He noted several of the fields of activities that Legal Information Services provides: landlord/tenant issues, divorce/custody issues, estate/succession issues, small claims court matters, personal financial matters, criminal matters, contracts, copyright issues, etc. The CSU services focus on consumer protection, human rights violations, immigration, issues that cannot be resolved by the Housing & Job Bank Committee (HOJO). Mr. Côté reiterated that the goal was to keep the two sources of legal information distinct from one another, and he welcomed any further discussion if desired.

Mr. Côté notified the Council that based on expected registration over the next three years, they have a forecast for Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) of 24,600. One source of revenue for the Student Services sector is government grants, which is based on a government determined allocation per FTE. He reminded the members of CCSL that the Student Services grant is based on “raw” rather than “weighted” FTEs, which is an important variable seeing that it will change the forecast of revenues depending on which FTE you use, and that “raw” FTEs are easier to predict rather than “weighted” FTEs because there are less variables attributed to “raw” FTEs.

Mr. Côté reminded Council that it would have to wait until the final class drop deadline of January 19th before a current year FTE could be assessed with greater certainty. Even with a possible decrease in registration, Mr. Côté did not expect that the previous year’s surplus would have to be used to compensate for such a decline. Mr. Côté informed Council members that Student Services had received some assistance from the University in previous years following the retroactive payment of salaries to employees after collective agreement negotiations were settled. Considering the University’s current budget deficit, Mr. Côté advised that the Student Services and Recreation & Athletics sectors should not expect financial support from the University over the next three years. It was noted that salaries have a major impact on operating budgets: approximately 90% of the

Student Services operating budget is devoted to salary. With an estimated 4% indexation factor from collective agreement obligations for salaries, if the Student Services sector were to do nothing to restrain its operating budgets, the cost to students would be considerable.

Two scenarios were presented: the cost to students if nothing were done to curb the Student Services and Recreation & Athletics fees versus the cost to students in light of the steps that are being taken to contain the Student Services and Recreation & Athletics fees. The latter scenario reveals the two main initiatives being implemented to lower the cost to students: non-salary and casual budgets were reduced wherever possible; and it will be recommended that the 2007-2008 Student Services operating surplus be used to offset salary increases over the next 3 year budget cycle. The summary of proposed fees for the Student Services sector is as follows: a total cost of fee increase per year to students based upon a 30 credit registration would be \$3.00 per year (10 cent per credit) per student for 2009-2010, \$4.50 per year (15 cent per credit) per student for 2010-2011, and \$4.50 per year (15 cent per credit) per student for 2011-2012. The Recreation & Athletics summary of proposed fees is as follows: a total cost of fee increase per year to students based upon a 30 credit registration would be \$0.90 per year per student over the next three years, 2009-2012. Mr. Côté noted that the fee increase would not be so contained if it were not for cost-reduction measures that will be taken and for the use of the 2007-2008 Student Services operating surplus. Mr. Côté opened the floor for discussion and distributed the 2009-2012 proposed budgets for the Student Services and the Recreation & Athletics sectors.

Ms. Kashfi asked what "Subsidies and Trust (DoS)" was in the revenues section of the Student Services budget. Ms. Morey responded that it was the account for the CCSL Special Projects. Ms. Kashfi asked what would happen to any surplus from that account, and Mr. Côté explained that it would be brought before CCSL and could be used to help lower the need to increase fees. Ms. Gomes inquired if any departmental revenues come from students through user fees. The following was reported: no Health Services revenues come from students; in Recreation & Athletics there are user fees for certain programs, for example Le Gym, by which students may contribute to revenues; Advocacy & Support Services charges a \$10 fee to international students for the administration of the health plan; Financial Aid & Awards does not receive any revenues from students. Mr. Wells commented that a 4% increase in salaries seemed like a significant increase and noted that the casual employment, in which students are mainly employed, is being cut. Mr. Côté replied that the cuts to casual salaries would not be so significant to have a detrimental impact on service offerings. In terms of the 4% indexation factor, Mr. Côté said that the decided amount must be applied because it is part of the collective agreements. Ms. Drew added that in the past a lower indexation factor was anticipated and the budget fell short because the indexation factor ended up being higher than projected. She felt that it is better to be on the conservative side, and then finish with a surplus in the end.

Ms. Kashfi asked if the Recreation & Athletics capital campaign, happening at the same time as a fee increase, would be considered "double dipping". Ms. Sheahan responded that the two increases happened coincidentally at the same time, which is beyond anyone's control. She added that the increase in fees, affecting the operating budget, covers annual operating costs. The capital campaign will work towards completing projects that will provide a legacy for the department that should last decades. Ms. Sheahan agreed that it is understandable how it could be questioned, and that is why these budget discussions are taking place. Ms. Kashfi said that students support the unions and recognize the salary obligations to employees. She asked what avenues have been taken to ease the burden on students while respecting the salary increases. Mr. Côté identified cost recovery with the University where possible and advocating with the University for greater government support. He agreed that salary increases must be respected, but added that as an institution, they must explore various means other than increasing fees to students. Ms. Kashfi suggested forming a special committee to reach out to the University for support. Mr. Côté reminded the Council that there had been a similar committee in the past and proposed that perhaps a new one should be formed. Ms. Stanbra added that every department is attempting to diversify and increase their sources of support. Dr. Boisvert said that it is important to remember how supportive the University has been, for example many institutions charge their Student Services sectors rent or imputation, which can be a huge burden. More importantly, the sector is allowed by the University to keep its surpluses. Ms. Gomes reiterated the need for a special committee to ensure that student fees do not increase to the point that they will hinder student enrollment.

Mr. Wells brought it to the Council's attention that there was a disparity between the undergraduate association fees found online and the fees found in the document distributed in the CCSL meeting on November 21, 2008. Mr. Côté offered to review and clarify any discrepancies.

Mr. Côté summarized that the next steps were to provide an opportunity for members of CCSL to meet with directors to discuss budgets in greater detail, then further discussion and budget approval will be sought from

CCSL at the next meeting of January 30th. However, if a special meeting were required thereafter, we would require a CCSL decision on the budget no later than February 15th. If the budget is approved, then an agreement needs to be formalized with the CSU and GSA in order to comply with the new Frais Institutionnels Obligatoires (FIO) regulation from the Quebec Ministry of Education. The final step to the budget approval would be tabling of the budget to the Board of Governors for the meeting of April 2009. The Chair reminded the members of CCSL of the proposed consultation times for review of the budget process: January 15th and 21st. She requested that Council members contact Jane Hackett to confirm their attendance.

8. NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Boisvert informed the members of CCSL that the President of Concordia University had put in place a series of Presidential Panels to support the University's Strategic Plan. The panels will focus on 3 areas of interest: the student experience; employee engagement; and community engagement. Dr. Boisvert will participate in the development of the panel on the student experience and felt that there was a need for discussion of the topic at CCSL. The goal of the panel is to review existing structures, conduct targeted inquiries and identify immediate to short-term actions (over the next 3-5 years) to be taken to enhance the student's experience at Concordia. A report must be submitted by March 31st, and Dr. Boisvert requested that the CCSL schedule a future agenda item to discuss the Council's thoughts. The Chair suggested calling a special meeting to discuss the matter seeing that there was no CCSL meeting scheduled for February. She offered that the meeting could be open to guests, and put forth February 13th as a possible meeting date. The Council agreed that a special meeting would be beneficial.

Mr. Chivi raised a concern about the International Student Tuition Bursary Fund and noted that several of his peers had applied for the bursary, but had been denied without sufficient justification as to why. Ms. Kashfi asked if the application and review procedures could be explained. Ms. Stanbra said that she would be able to provide statistics of the evaluation, however she did not have them with her at the time. Ms. Stanbra noted the following key requirements: that the applicant is a full-time student; that there was a financial need for the bursary; that supporting documentation is provided by the applicant. Ms. Dicaire requested that statistics be made available to the Council and said that some students had asked for specific reasons why they were denied, yet they received only a generic response with no detail. She suggested that the review committee provide the applicants with individual responses as to why they were denied. Ms. Stanbra agreed that this option would be explored in the future and that she would review the expressed concern from this year. Ms. Gomes proposed that perhaps students with great financial need were unable to carry a full-time course load because their financial situation required them to work. She suggested that meeting with students individually to discuss what issues were impeding them could improve the evaluation process to identify the students most in need of assistance. Ms. Stanbra welcomed suggestions and the opportunity to discuss potential changes to the existing system. However, noted that any policies and procedures associated with scholarships and bursaries fall under the mandate of the Undergraduate Scholarship and Awards Committee. Mr. Chivi asked what the reasoning for excluding part-time students from applying was. Ms. Stanbra noted a lack of funding as one of the reasons why a portion of the student population would not be eligible for the bursary. Mr. Côté acknowledged that while there is never enough funding to assist all students, a main restriction is that International student Visas require the student to be registered as full-time. In theory, according to this rule, there should be no part-time international students. Mr. Chivi asked if the University has advocated allowing international students to study part-time. Mr. Côté noted that this was a guideline imposed on the University by the government, and suggested that perhaps it would be a good time to rekindle the discussion on international students since the province of Quebec is encouraging international students who have graduated to remain in the province after they have completed their studies. Ms. Kashfi added that this may be a very important issue since new legislation will allow the international student fees to continue to increase.

9. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for January 30th, 2009 at Loyola – AD 308 10am.

10. TERMINATION OF MEETING

Ms. Sheahan motioned to terminate the meeting. Ms. St-Laurent seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.